

A Seasonable
ADMONITION
AND
EXHORTATION
TO SOME

Who separate themselves from the Communion of the
Church of SCOTLAND.

wherein is also discovered, that the things they complain of, are
either false on the Matter, or not sufficient to warrant a Sepa-
ration.

Unanimously agreed unto by the *Commission of the*
General Assembly, December 9. 1698. And pub-
lished by their Appointment.



EDINBURGH,

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Dear Brethren,



WHILE We rejoice in the goodness of God, in breaking the Yoke of our Oppression, and raising this Church out of the Dust, That, not only his faithful Ministers and People, have liberty to assemble together for Worship, but also the right and true Government of the Church is restored; Your withdrawing, and separating from the Church in Her Assemblies for Worship, doth cause us mix our Mirth with Mourning, and though long patience, and use of more private means, hath not yet prevailed with you, your Mother is not willing to make use of the Rod, but of the Spirit of Meekness, and hath given us in charge, in her Name, to invite you to *Peace* and *Unity*: And to answer and remove your scruples; and should not this be an acceptable Message, the very Names of *Love* and *Unity*, *Peace* and *Concord* are Lovely, and the names of *Discord*, and *Division*, and *Schism* hateful, so that all Men generally commend the one, and condemn the other, surely, all who have any respect, for the Holy Scriptures, and Word of GOD, will do it: How much is *Love* and *Unity* commended, and how oft are they commanded in Scripture, and how frequently and seriously is *Division*, *Discord*, and *Schism*, forbidden in Scripture: Read and consider these Scriptures *1 Cor. 1. 10. Eph. 4. 1.* to *10*

7. *Philip.* 2. *begin* and 3. 16. 1 *Pet.* 3. 8. The Church and People of God have special obligations, and peculiar Motives to Unity, *Eph.* 4. 3. to 6. the more it is to be lamented, that there should be Divisions about things sacred, and relating to the Worship of God, among them, who profess the same Religion, and are more one than they do well consider; and all who love the Truth and Peace ought to lament over it, and to endeavour Peace and Unity in the Lord, and to call others to it, and to seek and follow after it, so far as is possible, *Rom.* 12. 18. But it hath alwayes been found difficult, in times of division, to manage such Complaints, or Exhortations, and Advices, a right: for too oft in stead of quenching they spread the Flame, and something in the management occasioneth new Exasperation, things are received with such prejudice and jealousy, and every one apt to justify themselves, that it oft discourageth the Essay, but the Children of God must be the Children of Peace, and do what is possible for it. It were of great advantage, that there were in all of our Hearts a deeper sense of the obligation ~~there is on us~~, to Love Peace and Unity in the Lord, and of the sin and hurt that is by Division, which is the greater, that commonly it is justified and fathered upon God, and we wish with good Mr. *Burroughs* in his *Irenicum*, O that we could join in one thing, to sit down together, and Mourn over one another, till we have dissolved our Hearts into Tears, if we can thus get them to run into one another.

Perhaps, If we did duely consider, wherein we agree and did in these, walk by the same rule, it might be found the differences are not so great as to cause such distance and division.

We are all agreed that Peace and Love and Concord, are desirable Blessings necessar for the being and well being of any Society, *Matth.* 12. 25. And our LORD hath made it the Duty as well as the Mercy of his People, *Eph.* 4. 3.

We

We are also agreed, that We should not only Endeavour Unity in *Faith* and *Love*, but also *Union* and *Communion*; not only as Members of the same *Catholick Church*, and of the same *National Church*, but also in particular *Churches* and *Congregations* and *Assemblies*, for *Publick Worship*: For Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who hath Instituted these *Assemblies*, hath Instituted *Worship* and *Ordinances*, which can only be used in a *Company* and *Assembly* of His People. 1. *Cor.* 10. v. 16. 17. *Chap.* 11. 20. and *Chap.* 14. And the Honour of God requireth, that the *People* of God, meet together for *Joint Worship*ing of Him. *Psal.* 68. 26. and professing their one *Faith* and *Hope* in Him, and *Confessing* and *Avouching* Him before the *World*: And it is a choise peice of the *Communion* of *Saints*, and a mean of their mutual *Edification*. *Zech.* 8. 21. 22. 23. And it is a great *Sin* to *sorfake* these *Assemblies* for *Worship*. *Heb.* 10. 25. We do not plead, that *Christians* are bound to join with all who call themselves *Christians*, or *Churches* of *Christ*, nay if they be *Heretical Assemblies*, and such as overturn the *Foundation*, or be *Idolaters* in *Worship*, We should have no *Fellowship* with them. 2. *Cor.* 6. 14. *Rev.* 18. 4. Yea if any *Church* oblige to, or necessitat to yeild to, or to profess or Practise, what is *Sin* on the matter, We ought to withdraw: When *Errours* or *Corruptions* in *worship* are imposed as *Conditions* of *Communion*, We ought to withdraw from such *Communion*: For We most never yeild to, or approve of any *Errour* or *Sin*; But to withdraw constantly or customary from *Communion* with a *true Church*, and *Congregation* of Gods *People* in His *Publick Worship* and *Ordinances*, when found in *Doctrine*, and *pure* in *Worship*, who impose no *Corruption*, *Errour* or *Sin*, as condition of *Communion*, is a great *Sin*, contrare to clear *Scripture*, a stumbling to the *weak*, a grief to the *strong*, and prejudice to their own *Souls* who do so, and provocketh God to blast all *privat Means*. *Pro.* 28. 9. And hardens the *wicked* and *unbelieving*, and scarreth from the way of *God*.

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Doth it not then concern all of you, who withdraw from the *Communion* of the Church of Scotland, in the Congregations thereof, when Assembled for the Worship of God, to consider what ye are doing, while there is not owned by Her any Heresy, nor is She guilty of any Idolatry in Worship, nor is there any Sinful condition of *Communion* required of you, Our Confession of Faith and *Catechismes*, declare before the World Our Profession and Principles, and We hope you will acknowledge Our Confession to be as sound and full as any Church in the World hath, and every Minister when Ordained or Assumed into Our *Communion*, and every Probationer when Licensed to Preach is obliged to Subscribe this Confession, as the Confession of his Faith.

We Bless God the Worship of God is performed, and all the Ordinances of Jesus Christ dispensed with Gospel Simplicity and Purity, conform to the Mind and Will of God, without Idolatry, Superstition, or Mixture of Human inventions.

We do Beleive and own that Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of His Church, and that He hath Instituted in His Church, Officers and Ordinances, Order and Government, and not left it to the will of Man, Magistrat, or Church to alter it at their pleasure, and We Beleive this Government, is neither *Prelasical* nor *Congregational*, but *Presbyterian*, which now through the Mercy of God, is Established amongst Us, and Beleive we have a better Foundation, for this Our Church Government, then the Inclination of the People, or Laws of Men though We think it a Mercy, and matter of Praise to God, when People incline to owne the Truth, and the Magistrat doth by Law Establish it in his Dominions.

We have Order and Discipline in conformity to the Word of God, In Admission of persons, to Offices, and priviledges in the Church, We own no other Rules, than the Institutions of Jesus Christ, and Directions of the Holy Apostles, and the constantly received and approven Constitutions of this Church

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consonant thereto, though we may fail in the Application and Exercise of Discipline, as the best of Men in the best of times may fail, and there is need of much Prudence in the Exercise thereof, (especially when Diseases or Sins have been Epidemick, whether by Defection or Division,) to do it in such a way as may most advance the Good and Edification of the Church. 2. Cor. 10. v. 6. 8 and 1. Cor. 4. 21. Jude v. 22. 23.

We own it is the Mercy of Our Land, that We are a Land in Covenant with God, and We Lament for the Breaches thereof, in some by turning to Popery, in many by Prelacy, and many now by Division, and generally by Corruption of Manners, but We Bless God that though the Land hath dealt Treacherously with Him, and We have bitterly provoked Him to anger, He hath not yet forsaken Us, but is yet in the midst of Us, not only by His Ordinances, these outward Symboles of His Presence, but by His Spirit and the Power of His Grace, to the felt Experience of many at this day, and sure it is not safe to Separat, when Jesus Christ doth not Separat, nor to quit the House when God and Christ abideth in it, and to refule Communion with that Church, with whom Jesus Christ keepeth Communion.

May We not then ask at these who separat from Us, why they do so? Or at least may We not Intreat and Obtest you to lay aside prejudices and retire alone, and commune with your own Hearts, what is it you have to Justify before God and the Churches of Christ, your Separation from Our Assemblies for Worship? We have considered them, but find no weight in them, *they are either groundless Accusations, to give them no worse name at the time, or not relevant grounds of Separation;* We are not what you would have Us to be, or do not what you would, or do what you would not; We confess that We are not Perfect, but We desire and aime to be better; do not hinder, but come and help Us, were there not as great Defects and Faults in some of the Churches of Christ, mentioned in Scripture,

ture, as at *Corinth, Galatia*, and some of the Churches of *Asia*, mentioned Rev. 2. 3. And yet no command nor allowance for any to Separat from them, and let us ask while you Separat from us what Church is there on earth with which you would communicat and join in Worship? We acknowledge there are among Us Sins against the Lord Our God, and that in many things We offend all, for We know but in part, and are lyable to many Temptations, and Failings, and would not refuse to confess the Sins We are convinced of; but can you say you are Pure, might there not be Recriminations against you? But these things do not make for Peace nor edify, and therefore We forbear, but We desire the Churches *Vindication* and your *Satisfaction*. We shall therefore consider more particularly, what you complain of, but first would premise some things which We think you cannot in reason denie, and these shall be for most part from the Pious and Peaceable Mr. *Durham's Treatise of Scandal* Printed at *Edinburgh* an. 1659. part 4th concerning Scandalous Divisions C. 1. and C. 7. ---- Such as first, We may and ought to endeavour *Union* and *Communion*, though there be many things defective such as, (1) Though there be difference of Judgment in many things, see *Durham* p. 317. I mean (said he) in such things as are consistent with the Foundation and Edification, for Mens understandings are not perfect, nor of equal reach. (2) Though there be dissatisfaction with many persons, whether Officers or Members, and to refuse *Communion* on this account saith *Durham*, p. 318, were to expect the Barn floor should be without Chaff, ---- and to make the Command for *Union* obligatory to no Church, but that Triumphant. (3) *Union* may be consistent, with many particular failings and defects in the Exercise of Government as, (see *Durham* p. 318) Sparing some Corrupt Officers and Members, yea Censuring some unjustly, or the Admission of some who are unfit for the Ministry, and such like ---- These saith he have been sometimes pretended to be causes of Schism and Division in the Church,

Church, ---- But were ever condemned by all Councils and Fathers, and cannot be in reason sustained, for (faith he) p. 319) then (1) There should be no *Union* expected here, except We suposed that Men who have Corruption, could not fall in these Faults. (2) It is not unlike (faith he) but some of these were in the Primitive Churches, *Rev. 2. v. 14. 15. and 20.* There was tolerating *Jezebel* and the *Nicolaitans*.

We desire it may be noticed which the same pretious, Mr. *Durham* sets down p. 320. Rul. 2. such Defects as do not make *Communion* in a Church and in its Ordinances Sinful, will not warrand a Separation or Division from the same, ---- It is (faith he) acknowledged by all that there is no Separation, from a true Church, in such Ordinances as Men may without Sin Communicat into, although others may be guilty therein, ---- also Rul. 4. p. 321. He hath these words, while the General Rules tending to Edification in the main, are acknowledged, *Union* is to be kept, even though there be much failing in the Application: Because so there are fit weapons to make use of, and if there be a failing in the Application, it is the Persons deed that by his vote so misapplyeth, and doth not involve any other in that guilt, ---- besides that by joint and united Acting, much of that misapplication may through Gods Blessing be prevented, and p. 323. Rul. 6. When Men may Unite without personal guilt, or accession to the defect or guilt of others, there may and ought to be *Union*, even though there be failings and defects of several kinds in the Church; The reason before given (faith he) will clear this, because Men are to reckon, not for other Mens miscariages but their own, and no Church State is to be expected as is free of defects. Besides can it warrand a Man to abstain from his Duty, because others do not theirs, whereas there is no Sinful impediment lying in the way of his access thereto, and p. 324. He reckons these and such like to be such impediments (1) If a Person be put to condemn any thing he thinks lawful in his own former Practice, or

the Practice of others. ---- (2) If he be put to approve the deed or Practice of others, which he counted Sinful, or affirm that to be a truth which he accounteth Error. or (3) When some engagement is required for the future, which doth restrain from any Duty called for, or which may be called for afterwards. See also what the Pious and Learned Mr. Rutherford saith in his Peaceable Plea, for Pauls Presbytrie in Scotland, especially throughout Chap. 9. 10. and 11. And more particularly in Chap. 9. p. 98. What if many of them (he is speaking of them who have the Pure Word of God Purely Preacht, and the Sacraments duely Administrat, with Discipline according to Gods Word) what if many of them lead a life contrary to that which they profess, and yet the Governours use not the Rod of Discipline to censure them: Then whether should the Members Separat from that Church? They ought to Separat (say the Separatists) They ought not to Separat from the Church and Worship say We: They are to stay with their Mother &c.

See also peaceable Plea Ch. 11. p. 157. The Separatists urge the Incestuous mans Sin not censured, infected the Church, the infected Church, infecteth the Worship. *Ans.* I deny, that the Sin of the Worshiper, infecteth the VWorship to others that are not guilty; It infecteth the VWorship to them selves, but not to others, a VWorship corrupt by accident, only through the fault of the VWorshiper, may and doth make the Lords Supper Damnation to the Eater, and therefore the Eatter is forbidden so to Eat: a VWorship in the matter and Intrinsecal principle unjust and Sinful, is defiled both to the Man himself, and all that take part with him: as the Teacher of false Doctrine, and all that hear and beleive are defiled; But if the Sin of an unworthy Communicant, even known to be so, be Damnation to himself and defile the VWorship to others, then Paul would have said, *He that Eateth and Drinketh unworthily, Eateth and Drinketh his own Damnation and the Damnation of the whole Church*, and Paul should have forbidden all others to Eat and Drink, with all others

others who Eat and Drink unworthily, if he allowed Separation, but he saith *He Eateth and Drinketh Damnation to himself, not to all others.*

From all this we beseech you, Consider and keep in mind, that though you must partake with no Church in their Sins, yet you ought to keep Communion with any true Church in their Holy Profession and Worship, so far as you can do it without partaking with them in their Sins ; Now understand well and consider that nothing can make you partakers of other (either Church or Persons Sins) but your consent direct or indirect, and therefore that which signifyeth some such consent should be (1) If you by word or Subscription, or furtherance own any Mans Sin or Fault, you directly consent to it. (2) If you neglect any duty which lyeth upon you, for the cure of his Sin, you indirectly consent, for you consent that he shall rather continue in his Sin, than you will do your part to help him out of it, but if you consent not, but do your duty incumbent on you in your station, to recover others to amend what is amiss, your continuing in that Church, and joining in Worship is your duty, and their fault is none of yours.

We are confident, these few things well understood and duly considered and improved might satisfy and convince, that none of these things you complain of can be relevant and sufficient grounds of Separation : But we shall consider them more particularly, and shall not omit any of them, which we find in your Paper, though for brevity we may reduce them to fewer heads.

And (1) We find you complain of Ministers Conversation, that some are Light and Frothy, and Mr. John Hepburn standeth not to say, that some of them make a mock of serious Persons, and the Power of Godlinets, calling the former Sighers and Groaners, and the Latter Quakerism. *Ans/w.* These are grievous accusations, but general, why do you not condescend on the particular persons, we profess ingeniously,

we know none that do so, and till the persons be named, and the guilt proven, we must look on these as false Accusations, do you know the Men? or have you but a surmise of it, if you know them, and the truth of what is alledged, have you done your duty according to *Matth: 18. 17.* have you admonished them, or set others fitter than you on it? have you delated the guilty to the respective Judicators, will you do it yet? and we promise if it be proven, the person guilty shall be censured, according to his demerit: But though all this were true of some Ministers, doth this justify your Separation from all, how many worthy Ministers are there in the Congregations where you dwell Who are grave and edifying, and Preach and practise Godliness in the power of it, and yet you withdraw from them? Whether doth a Ministers personal fault pollute the Ordinance to you, if you do not partake of his guilt? Do what is proper to you to testify against his faults, and to get him reformed or censured, but while there is place for this, do not forsake the publick Worship: and bear with us, to tell you, your bespattering this Church and the Ministry thereof with general accusations, and then forsaking her Communion in Worship, while it is pure, and you have not done your duty, when there is place and access to it, hath more of Sin in it, than you are awar of, and more, than many of the things you complain of in others..

2. We find you have many complaints of the Exercise of Discipline and Government, such as that it is much neglected, or, but partially exercised, Insufficient Ministers admitted, and Scandalous Elders, Curates Received, and Prelates not Excommunicated; But Dear Brethren, Suppose all these were true will you maintain that these are sufficient reasons of Separation from Communion in Worship in a true Church? by what Principles do you walk, are you Presbyterians, or do you own the Principles of *Rigid Separatists?* Will you read what our worthy Divines have written on that subject, they will tell you, that

that it is not only a sinful *Separation*, and *Schism*, where it is without cause, but where it is carried beyond the ground, so that though there were ground to separate from Communion in one Ordinance, as the *Lords Supper*, it were not sufficient ground to separate from all; even so though there were ground to separate from Church Judicatories, yet that were no warrant to separate from Communion in Worship, yea, and they will shew to you, that though there be neglect, or mal-Administration in Government, that is no warrant to separate from Judicatories, while the Government is of Divine Institution, and there are Right Rules, though some erre in the Application. We add as to some of these, we deny the truth of them, till they be duly and legally made out, We profess we know not of any Ministers, that were ordained to Churches that were known to be Scandalous or Insufficient: and if any were afterward discovered to be such, they were Censured. And as the Apostle sayeth, 1 Tim. 5. 24. Some Mens Sins are made manifest before hand &c. and we know one entered into the Ministry, but upon tryal of their sufficiency, though Church Judicatories presume not to judge of Mens conversion, And it is a boldnes in Mr. John Hepburn to assert that many are received into the Ministry, who are strangers to a work of conversion, for though it is true, there are too many such in the best Church, yet to judge particular persons is unwarrantable boldnes, but if any Minister or Elder be insufficient or Scandalous, it is a great fault, and contrare not only to Scripture Rules, but also to the Acts and Constitutions of this Church, and there is access to present delation, let there be delation of the guilt, and due proof, and they will be censured, for we profess we know none such.

As for your complaints of receiving in Curates, and want of Zeal in casting them out that are assumed, and not Excommunicating the Prelates. *Answe.* We are on the one hand accused of too much severity, and by you, for want of Zeal, as also by others for not censuring of you for your *Schism* and *Separation*, but we will

wish you would study due discretion and knowledge with your Zeal, and that your Zeal may be universal against all Evil, and that you would understand and consider, that when Evils have been epidemick, either in defection or in division or disorder, the Apostolical Rules command, and the practice of this Church alwayes allowed, Prudence and tenderness to be used, 2 Cor. 10. 6. Chap. 12. v. 20, 21. Chap. 13. v. 10. Jude v. 22, 23. But suppose ye had ground to be displeased with, and greived for these, are these sufficient grounds of Separation from Communion in publick Worship? Will you consider the state of the Church of the Old Testament in diverse times, and in our Saviour's Dayes, consider the state of the Churches of Corinth, Gallatia, Philadelphia and Ephesus, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea, were there not greater defects in them than you can alledge among us, there were faults in Officers and People, decay of Zeal, neglect of Discipline, Tollerating Scandalous and Erroneous Persons, and yet no Warrant, no Command, nor allowance for Separation from them. See Mr. Samuel Rutherford's peaceable Plea, Chap. 11, page 160.

The same Answer may serve for the complaint of promiscuous Communions, which is not allowed in this Church. Nor do the accusers know what care Ministers use in trying Persons, their Knowledge and Conversation ere they admit them: but though it were so, doth this Pollute the Ordinance to you, or warrant you to Separat from it, far less from Hearing and Prayer? Look to it perhaps you may find your neglect of your Duty to such, and accusing others, polluteth you more; but come and help Us, We will do what We can to help any defect that may be in this.

3. We find you complain of it as a Greivance, that Ministers are not Faithful in reproving the Sins of the Land, and that in Facts they pass over in silence many gros Abominations. *Ans.* Such general Accusations sute not Gospel Charity, how can you so accuse Ministers when you hear none of them, it is well

Well known there hath been very particular Enumeration of the Sins of the Land former and present, even by Church Judicators in Printed causes of Fafts, and though each particular be not mentioned, they are comprehended under the heads mentioned, and it is the work of Ministers in their particular Congregations, to be yet more particular, as it may be most Edifying and as their Peoples case requireth; and can you say that they have all been unfaithful in this, their own Consciences and their Hearers can testifie against you if you should say it, and if you do not accuse them, why refuse you to hear such and Separat from all?

But the Instances you cheifly insist on are hearing the Curats, the accepting Indulgence and the Toleration, that these are either justified or not confessed and condemned. *Ans.* Anent these We would say these things, (1) it is undeniable that there were different sentiments and practices anent these things, among them that were Reputed, Learned, and Pious, and had suffered for their cleaving to the Government of this Church. (2) This is not the controversy of Our day, there is no matter nor occasion of debate anent them now, nor any practice anent them that may be an offence to any, Ministers are no where now settled by Indulgence or Toleration. (3) When Pious and Peaceable Divines Treat of the *Peace and Unity of the Churh*, they do advise to forbear the reviving the debates of former times among the Godly, or engaging to declare Mens sentiments anent them, as being contrarie to the Peace and Edification of the Church, when present duty is not concerned therein, when it is not about a Fundamental Truth or necessary Duty, and the forbearance doth neither marre any Duty that the Church in general is concerned in, nor endanger the *Salvation of Souls*, through the want of clearnes therein, nor inferre such inconveniences to the hurt of the Church, as such unseasonable awakning and keeping up of differences and Divisions may haye with it.

We

We are suspicioſ, there are three Doctrinal mistakes and errors, which occaſion your diſſion: One is, that you think because a thing is duty, it is to be done at all ſeafons, and you conſider not that a thing may be good on the Matter, which yet is not to be done at all times. Another is, As if you could not maſtaine *Union* and *Communion*, with any that diſſer from you in any thing, and cometh not up to your mind in all thiſſ. And the (3) Is, that where you apprehend perſons guilty of Sins, you cannot have *Communion* with them, unless they ex- pliciſtly and publickly confeſſ and forſake the ſame; all which are great mistakes, and of dangerous conſequence, and would make *Union* iſſible on Earth, in this imperfect ſtate of the Church. whereas *Judicious Caſuists* do recommend it, that they who would attaine *Unity* and *Peace* where Diſſions are, ſhould for- bear one another in Love, and as the Apostle di recteth wherein they are agreed walk by the ſame rule, and they tell Us that they who have the Truth on their ſide, may be the Sinful cauſe of Diſſion, when they too peremptorily preſs their light on others, in thiſſ not Fundamental or neceſſary, contrare to *Rom. 14. 22.* ſee *Durham on Scandal &c.* p. 286 and p. 358. He preſſeth this mutual forbearance in thiſſ controverted, --- and that ſeing the great ſcope of bringing furth any Truth, is the Edification of the Church, ---- therefore where the bringing furth thereof doth deſtroy more then edify it is to be forborn, and that it is not enough that the thing Preached for, is Truth, and the thing they condeſm, is Errour, which he provereth from *1. Cor. 10. 23.* and diſterfe reaſons. And that it is not inco- ſiſtent with a Minifters fidelity, in revealing the whole Counſel of God, for that is all that was neceſſary and profitabie for them, *Acts. 20. 20.* For no Minifter can bring furth every Truth, at all times, yea, may be, ſome may die, and not Preach all Truth all their life.

Aud the ſame Pious Mr. *Durham part 4. Ch. 1. 12.* p. 363. cautioneth againſt objeſting, to one another by paſt failings and

and miscarriages, and p. 365. tells how the Orthodox in the Ancient Church, wont to plead forbearance of awakning such contests see p. 367. when both had their failings in times of Temptation, they did confess to one another, and forgave one another, see also p 377. of forbearance in difference of Judgment and Practice, and p. 385. 386. and Chap. 15. p. 390. He saith, the thing being past ought not to be the occasion of a present and following division: And then proposeth the objection, by way of *Question* How can there be *Union*, till they who have acted Corruptly Repent, as may be said by the one side, and till (as may be said by the other,) these who have divided unjustly from the Church, shoul^d acknowledge their offence, to which he there *Answers* (1) What if neither party shall ever be brought to Repent, or acknowledge an offence, shall the Church in such a case never attain to *Union*, --- Repentance implyeth Conviction, how hard is that, how hard to get Men of one Judgement, and must *Union* be impossible till then? (2) He sheweth if this had been the mind of the Church, and Servants of Christ, there had never been publick Ecclesiastical Peace, nor privat Christian Peace.

Dear Brethren consider of these things, and that what ever of Right or Wrong there be in these things, yet they can be no just ground of Separation, for beside that many Ministers are not chargable with these, and yet you Separat from them; Your present Duty is not concerned in thete, far less is their privat Opinion anent these, or the forbearing to vent it, or not condemn them, sufficient ground of Separation, will you Separat from all that are not of your Judgment, and will not now condemn and Preach against these old things? Shew your warrant for this. will you Separat from all that are not of your Judgment in every thing, and will not condemn and confess every thing that you think wrong? Thus you may Separat from all the Churches and Ministers on Earth. where is this made a condition of *Communion* in *Scripture*? should not We receive

receive one another as Christ received Us. *Rom. 15.* But if He did not receive Us till we acknowledged all Our particular Sins, We should never been received: For who can understand his Errours. Charity obligegeth Us to beleive that every Godly Man confesseth and mourneth over all known Sins explicitly, and for all his Sins implicitly, and his not confessing, sheweth the want of Conviction, and that he is not of your Judgement, which may be his fault, but your Communicating with him in Worship, doth not make you partaker of his Sins or of any guilt, being neither required to justify what you think wrong or not to condemn, or testifie against it, but allowed to declare and protest against what you judged wrong in these, tho perhaps it might be as Edifying to forebear it.

But We find among your Grievances two yet more heavy Accusations, the one is, that ther's Corruption in the Constitution as it is now Established, being under the Bondage of an Erastian Yoke submitted to. But We deny the charge, as a false Accusation; do you know what Erastianism is? It is like few of you do. But do you not consider how Sinful and highly uncharitable it is to Accuse, Judge, and Censure, the Godly Ministers of this Church, who formerly wrestled against Prelacy and Erastianism, as so contradictory to themselves, and Treacherous to their Master, as to betray his Interests, and the Churches privilegedes to an Erastian Yoke.

But what are the Instances brought to prove so Grievous an Accusation, the first is, that General Assemblies are called, Indicted and Adjourned by the Civil Authority. *Ans.* We know no Reformed Church do deny the Magistrats power to Indict and call Synods and Councils. Were not the General Councils so called? And the Church of Scotland in the Assembly 1638. *Ses. 26. December 20th.* hath acknowledged it, and if it shall please the King to Indict a General Assembly, ordaineth all Presbyteries, Universities and Burghs to send their Commissioners for keeping the time and place which shall be appointed by His Majesties

jesties Proclamation, and in their Suplication to the King, they acknowledge they were conveened by His Majesties special Indiction: And the light of Nature may teach Us, he who calleth together, may dismiss when their work is done; but this must not be privative of, nor prejudicial to the Churches Power; We do Believe and, Avouch that the Church hath from the Lord Jesus Christ, Power and Authority to meet in Synods and Councils, about Ecclesiastick matters relating to Doctrine and Discipline, and this Power is Intrinsick to the Church, and as no Man can take it from Her, so neither should they hinder Her in the Exercise thereof: And if the Magistrat should forbid Her meetings, or dissolve them ere their Affairs be ended, He doth wrong the Church, and it should be humbly represented to Him, and the Churches Right be Avouched; and if the Churches need require, the Church may not only without the Magistrates call, meet, but sit, when prohibited, but this should not be without great necessity, nor should it be when the Church is like to have greater prejudice by it, then advantage. For in reference to Affirmative precepts, Christian prudence should ponder and chuse the season and circumstances, which conduce most for the Glory of God and Good of the Church, and imprudent rashnes and indiscretion, though under the Name of Zeal in unseasonable doing what is Duty on the matter, may do and hath done much hurt to the Church.

24. There is besides this another Accusation against our Assemblies, as prelimited, both as to Members and matter, and all this submitted to, without a Testimony against it. *Answe.* These are sinful and groundless Accusations; We are ashamed on your account, to expose the Grounds on which you found them: Why? One time, one Minister perhaps, through his own fears, withdraws from Publick Meetings of the Assembly, but was by no order Excluded, is this prelimitation as to Members? And again it is alledged, The Parliament set down Terms of receiving *Episcopal* Ministers; But did they by themselves, give them a share of the Government? No, But they

supplicat the King, to call an Assembly, to receive them; Or did they enjoine the Assembly to receive such? and did they not except from favour, these who were insufficient, Scandalous in their Life, Erroneous, or Supinely Negligent, which are all the grounds the Scripture gives, for debarring and deposing any from the Ministry; And when the General Assembly met, did they not freely consult and determine by Votes, the Terms of assuming into Ministerial Communion, Where then is their Prelimation? But grant there were encroachments on the Churches Right, and no Testimony against it; that is a weakness, and want of courage, but it is no just ground of Separation from Worship in a true Church.

There is yet another thing we find you stumble at, And that is, Ministers taking the *Oath of Allegiance and Assurance*, and We find, that Mr. John Hepburn did carry it so high, that in an open Congregation, he did sinfully, and uncharitably accuse the Ministers of this Church, As by that Oath, taking the Crown off *Christ's Head*, and putting it on a Mortal Mans, and as putting the Capstone on the Defection,

Answer. We are greived on your account, to find you stumbling at this, and to hear and see the Godly greived, and Enemies both of Church and State glad, and rejoicing, and some hardened in their false Accusations of *Presbyterians*, as Enemies to all Government; It might been expected, that our King, having been a *Blessed Instrument* in GOD'S Hand, to work so great deliverance for you and us, He should had more respect from you: Do you not think him your Lawful King? If a King be obliged to Swear, to rule and defend the People with Righteousness, are not the People bound to Swear Allegiance to Him? and are not Ministers Subjects? We hope, you will not join with *Papists* in Exeeming Ministers from Subjection to the Civil Magistrate; Read *Rom. 13. 1.* And may He not require of them to Swear Allegiance to Him, as well as He doth it from other Subjects: Is there any thing in the

the Oath which is unlawful on the matter, Or doth it bind to obey any unlawful Command? Here no Obligation to any new thing, but a new Obligation to a Duty Wee were formerly bound to.

Inst. 1. But what necessity say you, was there to enjoin it to Ministers. *Ans.* What if there was but an expediency and advantage in it, or who shall be Judge, either of the necessity, or Expediency of it? The King and Parliament, or such privat particular Men as you? May it not be said, If all in Publick Office be obliged, why should Ministers be exēemed? And perhaps, there were somethings at that time, which made it to be judged necessar, being a time of War, and there was need of something to distinguish betwixt Friends and Enemies, it was in a case of competition betwixt two Kings, like that between *Joſb* and *Athalia*, 2 Kings 11. 4. *Wherein Jehojada imposed an Oath of Allegiance, upon the Levites as well as others;* The like was done not long after the Reformation in *Scotland* in the competition betwixt King *James the 6th.* and his Mother Queen *Mary*: Ministers were to Swear the Oath recognoſing the Kings Authority out of the Pulpit, under the pain of deprivation, *Act 46. Parl. 3. K. Ja. 6 anno 1572*, and what if some that were none of our best Friends did ſuggeſt, that if *Presbyterians* were tryed, they would not engage to Allegiance, and the King and Parliament thought fit to try it, and Ministers did judge it their duty to confute this calumny.

Inst. 2d. But ſay ſome, This is made a new and necessar qualification and condition of being a Minister. *Ans.* Loyalty and true Allegiance is a duty and necessar qualification of every Christian Subject, and Ministers ſhould be exemplar: we do not ſay, that Swearing it is alwayes necessary, yet we do not deny, but the Magistrate may ſee cauſe to make it a necessary condition to all these whom he will countenance, and protect in the publick Exercife of the Ministry in his Dominions: and this

this is all, that the Act of Parliament implyeth, and it is an absurd and ignorant, but sinful and ungodly charge, that this is Ministers changing their holding of their Ministry, and it bewrayeth great uncharitableness, and impudent rashness, so to accuse the whole Ministry of a National Church; We own and avouch, we have and hold our Ministry of Jesus Christ, though by the mediation and hands of Ministers, who try and ordain, yet the free and peaceable publick Exercise of it, We owe under God, to Magistrates as nursing Fathers to the Church, and they may have little peace who losse this, by refusing a lawful Oath, to a lawful Sovereign.

Inst. 3d. But say you, this is appointed in stead of all other Oaths, and so excludeth the Oath of the *Covenant*. *Answe.* It is a grief of heart to hear such things alledged, We are confident the *Covenant* was not in the mind of these who made that Act, when they made it, nor can the words bear any such sense, but that this should be in stead of other Oaths of Allegiance, and Supremacy, or which were imposed under the late Government which should commend it; and is it not a pitiful and shameful thing then that it should be stumbled at?

Inst. 4th. It seemeth contrarie to the Act of the *Assemb.* 1648. *July 28. Sess. 18.* Discharging all Oaths in the common cause, without consent of the Church. *Answe.* That Act doth no wayes relate to this case, for that Act respects new Oaths about Religion or Reformation, or for approving some Administrations in the State, which the Church did not approve, and especially (as is there expressed) Negative Oaths and Bonds, which may any wayes limit or restrain Men in the Duties, to which they were obliged by *Covenant*. This Oath is not at all of this nature, but only respecting Civil Allegiance to the King, which doth neither oblige to allow any thing unlawful, nor can any way limit or restrain us in or from any duty.

And now *Dear Brethren*, Consider impartially, and without prejudice what is said, and the Lord give you understanding in

in all things, Retire alone, and consider before the L O R D , the Sin and Evil, the Scandal, the Hurt and Danger, that is in and by Division. Drunkenness and Whoredom are not more clearly, nor more frequently forbidden in the Holy Scripture. Division is contrary to the very design of *Jesus Christ*, the great Reconciler, *John* 11. 52. *Eph.* 1. 10. contrary to the design of the Spirit of Grace, and contrary to the design of all the Ordinances and means of Grace, which is to procure and maintain the Unity of the Church, *1 Cor.* 10. 17. *Eph.* 4. 13. 14. 15. 16. And as there is much Sin in Division, there is much Sin and Woe, and Scandal, and hurt by it, it hinders the success of the Gospel, and work of Reformation, it hinders the Conversion of the Infidel and Ungodly World, it opens a door both to Errour and Vice, It grieveth the strong, It stumbleth the Weak, It tempts some to turn *Papists*, and some to turn *Atheists*, It taketh off from the sweetness of Religion, and turns to Wrangling, and occasioneth a great decay of the life and power of Religion and Godliness; Though ye should seem to grow in Knowledge and Zeal for truth, while Division maketh you languish in the Vitals of Religion, *Peace* and *Love*, your Zeal, though it were to the losing of your Lives will avail you nothing, *1 Cor.* 13. 2, 3. *1 Tim.* 3. 14. Division is the deformity, yea it tends to the destruction of the Church, *Matth.* 12. 25. and to carry on Reformation by dividing the Godly, is to tear the Body in peices under a pretence of cure.

On the other hand, remember and consider what obligation lyeth on you, to endeavour the *Unity* of the Spirit in the bond of *Peace*, this is our Duty and Interest, it is pleasing to God, and profitable to us, it is for the Honour and Glory of God and good of Men: the Successe of the Gospel, the Conversion of Infidels and the Ungodly depends much on it *John.* 17. 21. It is the Life and Strength, the Beauty and Glory of the Church, *Psal.* 133. It is for the Edification, Growth, Joy, and Confort of particular Belivers, *1 Thes.* 5. 10. *Acts* 2. 46. and *Ch.* 9. 31. This

This would make us like Christ, who walked by Uniting Principles, preft Uniting Duties, commended Uniting Graces, Love, Humility, Meekness, forbearing and forgiving one another &c. This would make the Church on Earth, like the Church in Heaven, where Saints live in perfect Love with Joyful Praise to their Creatour and Redeemer: O Sir's if there could be shame in Heaven, would you not be ashamed to see them welcomed by the God of Peace, and Lord of Love in Heavens Glory, whom you reviled and refused *Communion* with causelēsly on Earth.

We beseech you therefore follow *Peace*, cease from all divisive courses, return to the *Union* and *Communion* of the Church ſeing you may, (if you conſider what is ſaid) do this without Sin: and in order to bring you to the way of Truth and Peace, ſtudie humility and Brotherly Love, and think soberly of your ſelves, *Phil.* 2. 3. *Rom.* 12. 3. 10. Beware of Judging, and Censuring, and Slighting, and Speaking evill of others, *Jam.* 3. 1. 14. 16. and *Ch.* 4. 11. 12. And though they diſſer from you in ſome things, let not that break of your Brotherly Love; but notice and obſerve what Grace and Good there is in them, more then their deſects, and commend what is good, as well as condemn what is evill, Labour to abound in theſe Uniting Graces mentioned, *Col.* 3 11. 12. 13. and labour for a proportionable Growth in Grace, and beware of Zeal without knowledge and ſpend not moſt of your Zeal about leſſer things; ſtudy Univerſal Holineſs, and in particular the Duties of your particular Callings and Relations, be not Idle nor Busie in others matters, and keep within your own line and Calling, 1. *Cor.* 7. 20. 24. The feet muſt not uſurp the Office of the eye, 1. *Cor.* 12. 8. 9. 11. v. 15. 16. 17. 19. 28. 29. Take heed how you let your Zeal loſe againſt the Ministers of the Church leſt you bring their Persons and Offices into contempt, leſt by disgracing them, you weaken their Interest in the People, and hinder their doing good, this is to do the Divils work, if you be

be offended at any thing, in their Persons or Ministration, will you come to them and conferre with them thereanent, that they may be Reformed if faulty, or you Informed if mistaken, stand not at distance, but entertain frequent and friendly converse with them, and have fellowship in these Dutyes, wherein you are agreed, *Phil. 3. 15.* Would Christians meet together with their Pastors, sometimes to poure out their hearts in Prayer to God together for their joſt concerns, and to Communicat Spiritual Gifts, it might tend to remove uncharitable jealousies, and endear their hearts one to another. It is impossible for Christians to come to an *Union* in things wherein they differ, un-till they come to a *Communion* in things wherein they agree; And to conclude, get more esteem of Gods Publick worship and Ordinances, and of the good to be received by them, get more Love to God and his People and Ordinances, and your own Souls, and you will have more desire to approach to God, and to have *Communion* with His Church and People, and to hear with delight them that bring glad Tydings of good things, and of feeding beside the Shepherds Tents. Return, Return *Dear Brethren* in Love and Peace, to the *Union* and *Communion* of the Church in uncontrovected Dutys, which involve you in no sin; if any thing offend you exoner your selves by your Testimony in Gods order and way, but neglect not your Duty, and wrong not your own Souls: If you will not hearken, our Souls shall mourn for you in secret places, and you will give your Pastors cause to complain of you to God, and you may provock Him to Testify His displeasure against you, and the Church find it Her Duty to use the Rod against the obstinat, but We shall Pray, and wait for better things from you.

Having thus given this Loving Admonition and advice to these who Separat from the *Communion* of this Church; We would with all seriouness direct a few words to our *Reverend Brethren* of the Ministry: Let us labour to be duly affected with these divisions, with the sin and scandal and hurt of them, and

with the anger of the Lord manifested therein, let us lament and mourn over them, and earnestly Pray for that which is promised, *Zeph.* 3. 9. that the Lords People may Worship Him with one consent: And spare no pains, and neglect no lawful means to make up the Breach, and pity and pray for them who Separat, and though by their censoriousnes and divisive courses, they weaken your hands and grieve your hearts, and tempt you sore, give not way to bitter Zeal with proud wrath or passionat reviling of persons, but with Prudence and Patience, Love, and Meekness, Labour if possible to recover them, according to the Apostolical direction, *2. Tim.* 2. 24. We would not have you to sooth or flatter them, or to escap their censure, or to gain their favour to connive at, far less com; ly with them in their misguided Zeal, but in Love, yet with Gravity and Authority Reprove and endeavour to convince of the Sin and Scandal of their divisive practices, and to allure them to Love and Peace ; And we beseech you be very cautious and careful alwayes, and in all things, of giving Offence, that the Ministry be not blamed, but in all things approve your selves as the Ministers of God, *2 Cor.* 6. 3, 4. *Chap.* 4. 2. Commend your selves to their and all other Mens Consciences in the Lord, take heed to your selves, and to your Doctrine. *1 Tim.* 4. 16. Labour to be ensamples of the Flock, in Word and Conversation, in Charity and Spirit, in Faith and Purity, *vers.* 12. Study to behave in your private walk, and in your Ministerial behaviour, so that you may practically confute what they object, who are contrary minded, *Tsl.* 2. 7, 8. Study Prudence and Piety, Self-denial, Humility, Meekness, Patience and Love, Contempt of the World, and Heavenly Mindedness : Be grave in your Apparel, Edifying in your Communication and Converse, be faithful and diligent Watchmen, and watch over Souls, as those who must give an account, Be conscientious in Visiting and Catechising, Preach the Word diligently, seriously, and plainly, Study to shew your selves approv-

approved of God, Workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God, 2 Tim. 2. 15. Be Zealous and Faithful Reprovers of Sin, both publickly and privately as may be most edifying, be not through cowardice afraid of Man, nor by imprudence and indiscretion under the name of Zeal marre Edification, Be vigorous and impartial, yet prudent, in the Exercise of Discipline, and keep back from the *Lord's Supper*, the Ignorant and Scandalous: Be specially careful to admit none to Office in the Church as Minister, Elder or Deacon, but such as after due Tryal, shall be found blamelets and well qualifed, and be zealous to purge out the Insufficient and Scandalous. *Dear Brethren*, Let us study to grow in the Love of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, and in Love to the Souls of People, and in Love to the Work committed to us for the Salvation of Souls, Let us keep clos to his directions, and abide in his work and way, depending on Him for Furniture. And hoping for the Crown promised to the Faithful, John 21. 15, 16, 17. 2 Tim. 4. 22. 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3, 4.

We shut up all with the words of the Apostle to both Ministers and People, *Philip*. 2. begin. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of Love, If any fellowship of the Spirit, If any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye our Joy, and be like Minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind, 2 Cor. 13. 11.

Finally Brethren, Farewel: Be Perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind. Live in Peace, and the GOD of Love and Peace shall be with you. Extracted by

Jo. Moncreif *cls. Com.*

E R R A T A

Page 22. line 27. read papers p. 23 l. 18. for made manifest r. open p. 16. l. 33. dele r.

F I N I S.